

FOURTH SECTION  
SIXTEEN PAGES

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## RIDDLE OF THE SHRINE OF OSIRIS



General view of excavation. Ruin is 100 feet long and 60 feet wide and lies 40 feet below desert surface. An outer wall 20 feet in thickness contains cells. Picture below—Reconstruction showing great hall; pool which is Strabo's Well and "Tomb of Osiris."

### Only Article Authorized by Egypt Exploration Fund Tells of the Discovery of Supposed Pool of Osiris at Abydos

Numerous inaccurate accounts of the recent discovery of the so-called Pool of Osiris at Abydos, Egypt, by the Egypt Exploration Fund have been printed. THE SUNDAY SUN presents below the only authorized article given out by the organization in the United States. It was prepared by Prof. Thomas Whittemore, the only American on the staff, and is accompanied by photographs taken under the direction of Prof. Edouard Naville, director of the work.

By THOMAS WHITTEMORE,

Assistant Director and American Representative on the  
Staff in Egypt of the Egypt Exploration Fund.

**D**URING the past winter at Abydos in Upper Egypt the excavators of the Egypt Exploration Fund, under the general direction of Prof. Edouard Naville of Geneva, have found a unique and hitherto wholly unknown building. To the American subscribers to the fund in particular may well belong the first fine thrill of the news, and even a sense of possession of the building itself also, and this because their generosity opened the excavation in the winter of 1911 and because their encouraging faith in those who undertook the work, confronting a spirit of delay and indifference, has brought it off triumphantly in the end.

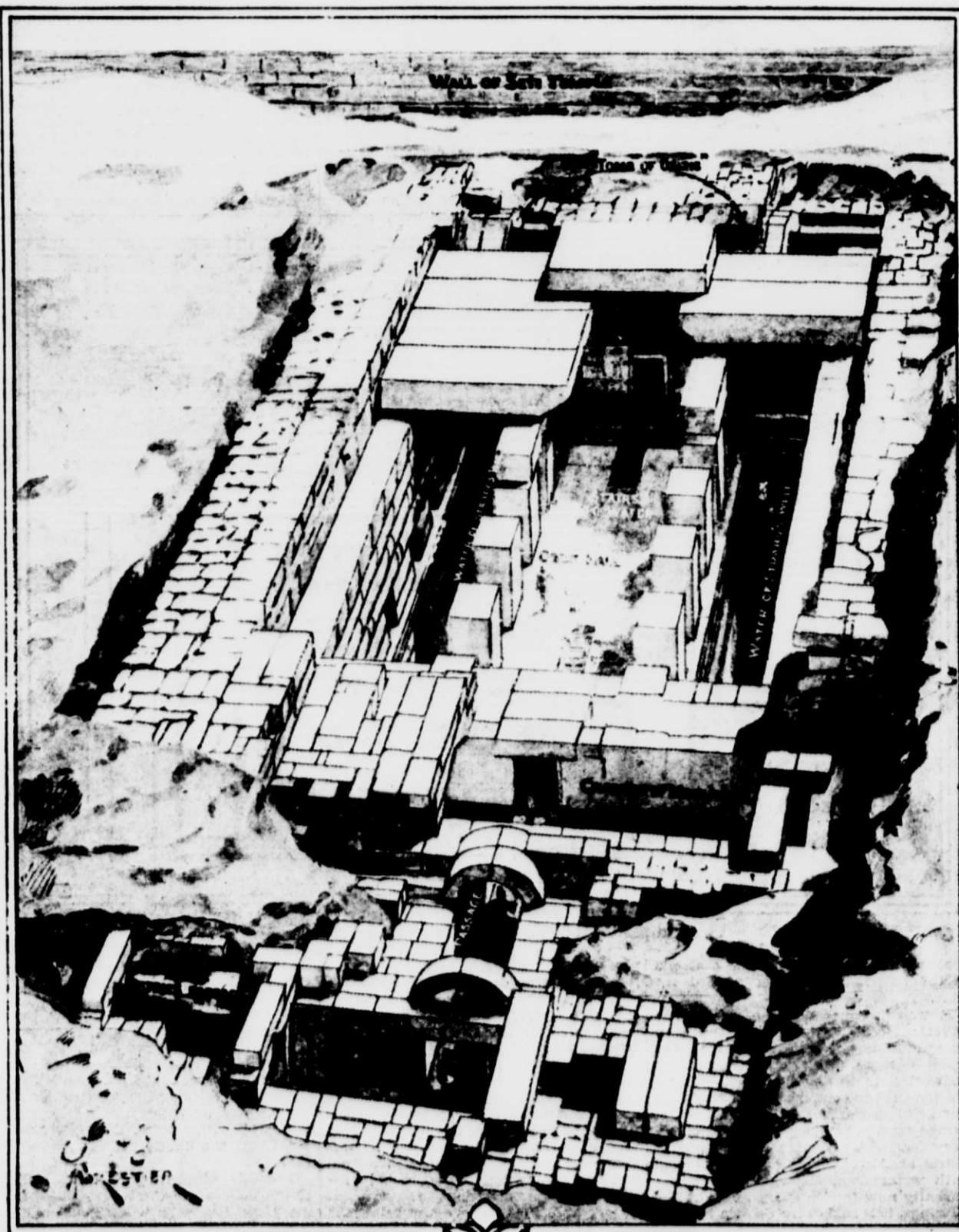
Abydos, or Abydos, as the Greeks first called it, is one of those places, like Delphi and Jerusalem, where the grandeur of nature is the inspiration and reflex of a race much occupied with the things of God. Here the desert, like a sea, makes a bay in the western hills and sets a flaming boundary to the world.

Two promontories loom up like guardians. Desert waves dashing up the slopes break in sand foam among the loose boulders and rush back in torrents out of the higher wadies or valleys. Paleolithic man has left his flints scattered over the summits of these hills, and from his undated life until today Abydos has never ceased to be the abode of the living and of the dead.

Here Egypt came to worship, Osiris, the pre-Christian divinity who had been slain and who had risen from the dead. The legend of Osiris, as it was traditionally known in Greek times and written down by Plutarch and Diodorus, is briefly that the god was slain by his jealous brother Seti, and his body was torn to pieces and scattered by the Hebrew god Seti and the seventy-two conspirators. Isis, the wife of Osiris, made search for the fragments, and wherever she found one she erected a shrine and assembled the parts in a certain hollow tree. Tradition on all sides asserts that the head of Osiris was buried at Abydos; hence Abydos is the "mound of the Osiris head emblem," symbolized by the emblem containing the head surrounded with plumes and pierced by the serpent. "Osiris took his seat in the west," the place of the dead.

As Egypt in political life became one, the attributes and influence of local tribal gods were absorbed by Osiris; he became in some sense the spiritual fountain head, the great unknown source. Whatever it was based upon, a thing or a thought, this creed became hallowed at Abydos by centuries of human faith and hope in eternal life. Abydos was venerated from prehistoric times until the day of the Emperors.

Sanctuaries and temples as well as tombs of the dead, multiplied beyond number. The fame of the shrine and the power of the rich and privileged priesthood were at their height in the Twelfth Dynasty; but Seti and Ramesses II. added new sanctuaries to it by the beauty of their temples—temples not like Karnak or Luxor, dynastic foundations, but royal oratories.



### Hitherto Unknown Building Where Egypt Worshipped Pre-Christian Divinity Unearthed Last Winter

much as St. Mark's in Venice was the private chapel of the Doge.

In the Middle and New Empires the principal event of the year at Abydos was a mystery play, the earliest known drama of action, presenting a picture of the chief incidents of the god's mythology. It was a play in eight acts, now completely lost, save as far as the principal scenes are indicated for us in the great stèle of Ikhnofret of the Twelfth Dynasty, now in Berlin. Thousands come to Abydos during those annual festival days, as they come to-day to the Milla of Sheikh Said el Bedawi at Tentah, or that of Imani Chafe, south of Old Cairo.

It was a wise decision of M. Naville's not to work last year against a season's odds facing us in M. Naville's 80,000 cubic feet of rubbish which had lain since his excavation of the Temple of Seti about sixty years ago. In those days less attention was paid to the tipping of rubbish than now, and his was just over the place where we ourselves wanted to dig. M. Naville waited until the department of antiquities had fulfilled its generous offer to remove the hill. This it did last summer under the direction of M. Gustave Lefebvre, and we returned to resume our work, thus enormously advanced to level ground, on the 16th of December, 1913. The staff of excavators comprised Prof. Naville, G. A. Wainwright, G. M. Gibson and myself.

We divided the site into two parts, north and south, and began at once to follow out the walls of the chamber which we had merely entered two years ago, then believing it to be two chambers at the end of the Merneptah sloping passage. At the same time we began to open the ground as near as we dared approach the Temple of Seti without fear of affecting the integrity of its foundations. This was an attempt at the outset to find the limits of whatever construction lay between what we had already excavated and Seti's temple.

Double walls about six meters wide soon began to appear both to the north and to the south. The casing was of limestone, containing fossil shells (Lacuna thalassia) which may have come from any of the quarries along the river between Bahyana and Keneh. The inner wall was of magnificent red sandstone, not quartzite, probably from the quarries of Agabeti-Sagiar near Assouan. The west chamber, which we went on clearing all the while, was constructed of large blocks in parallel horizontal courses of a compact gray variety of sandstone from Gebel Silsilah, northeast of Assouan.

It was evident from the first that we were digging into a ruin. Immense shattered blocks of red Assouan granite lay about us and the tops of granite piers came into view. For our wonder, too, enormous millstones appeared as the work progressed. One of these stones scarcely turned full round before another circle embraced it, as Dante says, and struck motion to its motion and song to its song.

We had taken accurate aim in shooting at this site, for as we went on day after day a complete outline of a great rectangular hall about thirty-three meters long and twenty-two meters wide became clear. Two rows of five piers, all monolithic, but one and two engaged piers at each end, all broken off at different heights gradually divided the hall into three aisles.

In the northeast corner, to our joy, several of the colossal granite blocks were still nobly resting on their granite lintels. Some of them were five meters long and not less than eighty tons in weight; they showed us how the aisles were originally roofed, and in the centre aisle at the east wall two mammoth corbels or shelves jutted out, bearing the remains of mortar, that we might not remain ignorant how the central aisle was spanned.

The question oftenest asked us by amazed visitors stepping out of the Temple of Seti upon the desert, to see our work was: "How could you have known it was here?" For our guidance

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